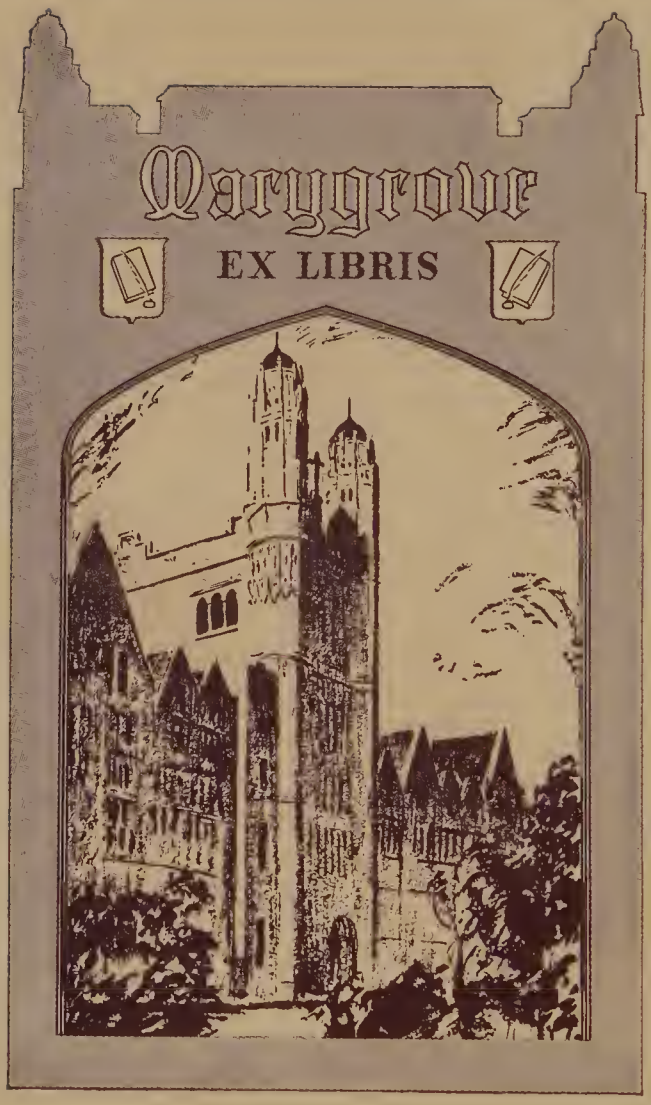
WHEN THE TIDE TURNED IN THE CIVIL WAR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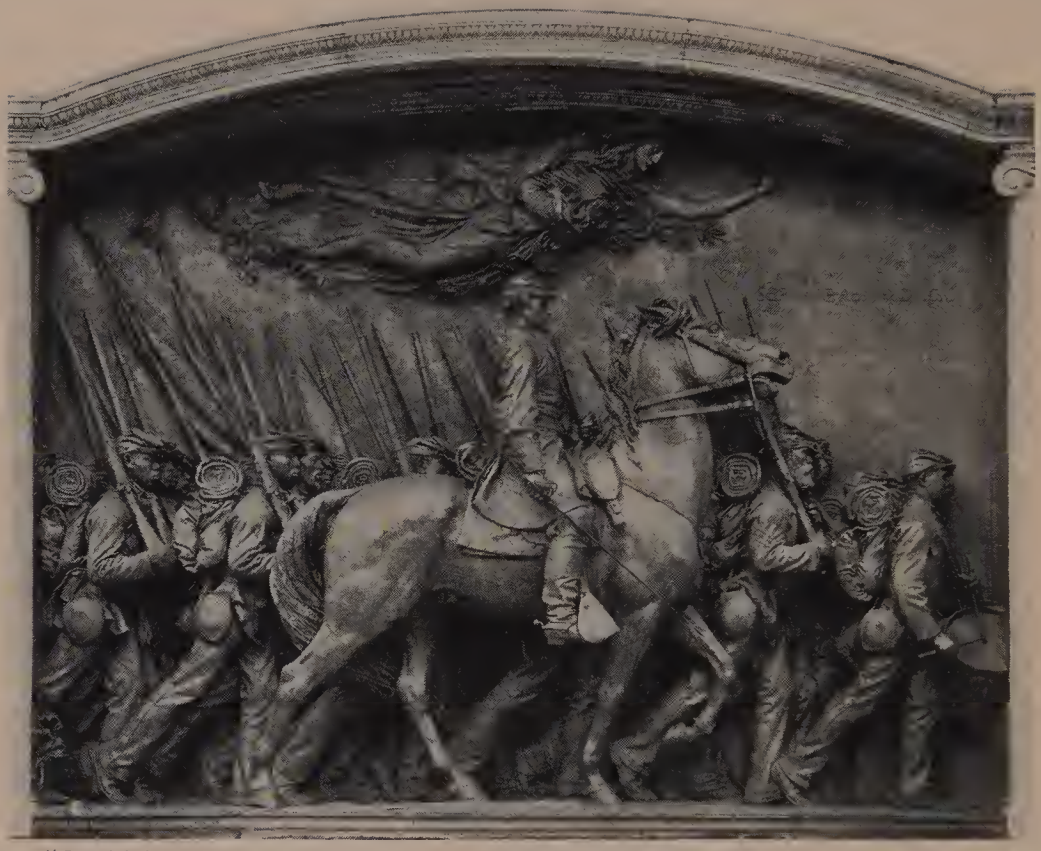

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MEMORIAL

TO

COLONEL ROBERT GOULD SHAW

ON

BOSTON COMMON

WHEN THE TIDE TURNED IN THE CIVIL WAR

BY

MARTHA NICHOLSON McKAY

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TO THE MEMORY

OF

COLONEL ROBERT GOULD SHAW

AND

HIS REGIMENT

THE 54TH MASSACHUSETTS

FOREWORD

THE following pages were written about the time of the unveiling of the Shaw monument in 1897. It is still a pleasure to recall the kindness of Mrs. Shaw, the Colonel's mother, during their preparation. She lent many letters, journals and other material, which were of great assistance in making this account authentic. Of even more value, however, was her sympathy with the writer's idea that there is a far deeper significance in this first test of the negro as a soldier than has been accorded in history. She desired so earnestly to have this paper printed, that it is fitting to acknowledge, now that it is in book form, the generous and unfailing encouragement which she gave toward that end.

The unusual quality of Mrs. Shaw's nature

was manifested through all the years of her long life. One may have a glimpse of that quality in her exclamation as she watched her beloved and only son riding at the head of his regiment through Boston on the way to Fort Wagner—"What have I done that God has been so good to me!"

It is also of interest to record that at the time this paper was being written, it was discovered that Milton Robinson, who had been for many years a faithful helper in the yards and gardens of our neighborhood, was a survivor of the 54th Massachusetts. His pleasure at finding someone else who knew and honored his Colonel was memorable and touching. Bit by bit, through subsequent conversations, his life-story came to light. He is the runaway slave mentioned on page 40, and from his vivid recollections of the attack on Fort Wagner came some of

the most poignant details of that tragedy. He is still living in Indianapolis, his home city since his honorable discharge from the Union Army. Though age has brought its infirmities, he is uncomplaining, and dim eyes have not dimmed his devotion to Colonel Shaw—his hero.

M. N. McK.

INDIANAPOLIS,
FEBRUARY, 1929.

WHEN THE TIDE TURNED IN THE CIVIL WAR

OVER Boston the sun had risen for more than two hundred and thirty years, but never had its light shone more brilliantly on Faneuil Hall, and the trees on the Common, than on the morning of May 28th, 1863.

For more than two years Civil War, in the words of Wendell Phillips, "had, like Niagara, thundered to a music of its own". Of the more than two thousand battles of that war, great and small, nine hundred had been fought, and thirteen hundred were yet to be recorded. On this May morning, although it is scarcely nine o'clock, the air of Boston is full of expectation. The principal streets are brilliant with the National Colors. In the soft spring air the flags flutter, and yet one hundred extra policemen

are in reserve, for it is not known how even liberty loving Boston will welcome the new regiment, the 54th Massachusetts, which is about to leave the camp at Readville and march through Boston, on its way to South Carolina.

To this first regiment of free colored men from the North is given the task of proving the efficiency of negro soldiers. Governor Andrew has already addressed to the men these words: "I know not when, in all human history, to any given thousand men in arms has been committed a work so proud, so precious, so full of hope and glory, as the work committed to you." The rank and file of the 54th Massachusetts were to be men of African descent, but the officers were to be not alone Anglo Saxons, they were to be also "without reproach or fear".

And now comes the sound of martial music. It is Gilmore's famous band preced-

ing the regiment led by its young colonel, whom scarcely twenty-five years have crowned. Many look for the first time upon his youth and beauty, but there are many who know that he belongs to that American nobility which is not yet out of fashion in Boston. That aristocracy, in which culture, morality and loyalty to principles are joined to material wealth. They know also that he is the only son of Francis George and Sarah Sturgis Shaw, and that through the marriages of his sisters he is brother-in-law to George William Curtis, General Charles Russell Lowell and General Barlow. Knighted by his inheritance, Robert Gould Shaw was the flower of all that was noblest and best in preceding generations—and now through the narrow, picturesque, historic streets of Boston he is leading his regiment that is to *be* historic.

One who had seen Garrison dragged by

the mob down State street, and later Anthony Burns marching back to slavery almost hidden by his heavy guard of United States troops, now sees Garrison himself, standing in the house of Wendell Phillips, his hand resting upon a bust of the Hero of Harper's Ferry; and as the regiment passes the music changes, and the band plays "John Brown's Hymn"; and then *this* music is drowned in the tumult of cheers, while from windows and steps, and crowded curbstones, handkerchiefs and flags wave in token of the words which cannot be spoken.

Friends of freedom, champions of liberty, have come to Boston to witness this day. Frederick Douglas is there, bearing on his body still the scars which slavery made. He now sees his own son marching as Sergeant Major of the best drilled regiment Massachusetts has sent to the front. Whit-

tier is there, leaving his quiet home for his first and last sight of armed men. This peace-loving poet (with a heart that could beat a charge, and eyes that could blaze with indignation at freedom's foes), wrote to Lydia Maria Child, "The only regiment I ever looked upon during this war was the 54th Massachusetts on its departure for the South. I can never forget the scene as Colonel Shaw rode at the head of his men. The very flower of grace and chivalry, he seemed to me beautiful and awful, as an angel of God come down to lead the host of freedom to victory. I longed to speak the emotions of that hour, but I dared not, lest I should indirectly give a new impulse to war."

Another witness of this march through Boston wrote, "I could not help contrasting his fair hair and delicate refined features

with the dusky faces of his soldiers, and I thought of him as the type of the Anglo-Saxon race offering itself in sacrifice for the African. I thought of what he was going to encounter, and it seemed to my fancy he was the young angel Michael of Guido's picture, trampling down Satan, yet still retaining a sweet and noble expression."

Young as he appeared, this fair leader of the first dark regiment had already experienced two years of hard service as a soldier; nor was he unaccustomed to the wild enthusiasm which often seeks to veil the terrible features of war. As he received this ovation in the streets of Boston, perhaps his thoughts went back to that April morning in New York City in 1861; that morning when the Easter bells had scarcely ceased to ring the glad announcement of Nature's resurrection, when Broadway suddenly blos-

somed with flags, and the famous New York seventh hastened away to the defense of Washington. In its ranks marched the flower of the youth of New York, Theodore Winthrop and his brother, and two brothers of George William Curtis, Phillip Schuyler and Robert Gould Shaw. Wrote Mr. Curtis, "If we lose Washington tonight, or tomorrow, as we probably shall, remember that we have taken New York. This day has been beyond description; the statue of Washington held in its right hand the flagstaff of Sumter, and the only cry is "Give us arms". Again he writes, "The seventh regiment went blessed and wept over; mothers' eyes glistened at the windows upon the glistening bayonets of their boys below. I saw a thousand men marching as one hero, and they marched for justice, and God was their Captain". Theodore Winthrop said, "It

was worth a life-time, that march down Broadway. Only one who passed as we did through that tempest of cheers can know the terrible enthusiasm of that occasion".

But two years have passed, and the city which blossomed with flags and rang with enthusiasm in 1861 is soon to be lurid with fires lighted by the mob; those terrible days when the draft riots came; when the asylums for fatherless and motherless children were laid in ashes simply because these children had dark faces. Now, as the order comes from the Secretary of War to Governor Andrew, "Have the 54th report at once to General Hunter, S. C.," the wires also warn Colonel Shaw, "It will not be safe to take your regiment through New York".

To understand, with any degree of appreciation, the state of the country and the mission of this first black regiment, we must

unroll for a brief period the record of the two preceding years. Except in enthusiasm, never was a nation so completely unprepared for the coming conflict as was the North in 1861. The handkerchiefs which waved an adieu to the New York Seventh were of daintiest lace, but soon from the humblest walks of life, and from farm and factory, came the men, who in those first days gave their lives so freely, in the mistakes, and experiments, by which the free states learned the terrible art of war.

In the perspective given by thirty-five years, it is appalling that the true purpose of the war should ever have been denied by the North; its purpose was never disavowed by the South. Just one month before the marching of the first regiments, Alexander Stephens, vice-president of the New Confederacy, had said in his great speech at

Savannah, "At the time of the formation of the Constitution of the United States it was the general opinion that slavery would be evanescent and pass away. Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea; its foundations are laid, its corner stone rests upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man, and that slavery is his natural condition". This was a straightforward declaration of Southern principles. Shall the attitude of the North be judged by Lincoln's first inaugural? He says, "I have no purpose directly or indirectly to interfere with the institution of slavery in the states where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so". Thus with an indifference to the nation's crime, which served as that crime's protection, the great North began the war.

In the midst of slavery's increasing power how had the often feeble flame on Liberty's altar been preserved? Harvests are not gathered without the sowing of seed. Some power had so nourished the love of freedom that a great army had been marshalled by a single call! The years between 1830 and 1860. have been called the martyr age of America, and the history of that time has not yet been written. In 1833, when a handful of men and women organized the American Anti-Slavery Society, what a small cloud it was on the political horizon. In 1860, with what meaning the heavens were darkened. So intensely individual were they that many and various were the theories entertained by the Abolitionists in regard to the abolishment of slavery; but in the main they were non-resistants. Garrison was a man of peace. Stephen Foster, the

most vehement of all those who went about calling for repentance, continually allowed himself to be cast out from lecture hall and church; bruised by blows, his coat torn to shreds, but on no account would he have resisted violence with violence. When John Brown calmly, even cheerfully, ascended the gallows which slavery erected among the Virginia hills, the Abolitionists mourned alike for their hero and his methods. Acknowledging that—

"Above the brave old fighter's head
The martyr's halo bent".

Parker Pillsbury remembered with sadness the ancient prophecy, "He that taketh the sword shall perish by the sword". Before 1860 in the North, as well as the South, the Bible was opened frequently where the pages sanctioned slavery. John Randolph's

words were prophetic, for long before this he had said, "The South does not rule by her slaves at home, but by her slaves in the North".

Before 1860, not alone south of the Ohio, but in Puritan New England as well, was free speech endangered. Yet, in defiance of personal danger, and above the hoarse roar of the mob, the voice of the great preacher, Theodore Parker, in Music Hall, Boston, was heard naming the almost fatal illness of the Nation. "It is slavery," he said, "That hideous snake which Southern regions breed; with fifteen unequal feet it has crawled Northward, fold on fold, coil on coil, until now the whole land is poisoned with its breath". And still, as the evil they fought seemed to strengthen, the zeal of the Abolitionists was ever a holy zeal, consuming time and strength and every worldly

interest. With faces zionward they worked on. The grave of Lovejoy was a constant reminder in the West, and from the very heart of slavery, from South Carolina and proud Charleston, came the Grimke sisters, their consecrated souls discovered in their faces, as they announced to the North, "You that are not of the South cannot know the horrors of slavery".

From the constant pens of Whittier and Lowell came words to swell the chorus of freedom. And Charles Sumner stood in the United States Senate in the terrible storm and stress of that time, "Ever steering boldly for the Pole Star". Nightly the faithful Quakers and their helpers made up the trains for the Under-ground Railroad, and what did it avail? O doubting multitude and faithful few! No miracle, this wild enthusiasm of sixty-one; but a harvest from

long years of patient seed-time; for the devoted men who had for years borne the ridicule of the two strong parties; who had, in the language of these party leaders, "thrown away their votes", the men called "Conscience Whigs", the men of the Liberty and Free soil parties, that holy minority, had at last turned the scale and made it possible to elect a president in whose Cabinet no slaveholder would be found. A president whose sad eyes contradicted his cheerful words; the man whose memory grows greater and dearer as the nation he helped to rescue grows more grateful with its years. Yet, it is not strange that this important factor in his election in 1860 felt grieved, and unrepresented, in that clause in his first inaugural, which acknowledged disinclination to touch the plague spot in the Nation's heart. But now on the April air the sound of Sumter's

guns rolls Northward, and men look into each others' faces and inquire, "Are we a nation? Or, is the North but a suburb of South Carolina"?

In less than a month from the delivery of Stephens' speech, the first soldiers to die in the Civil War, the men of the sixth Massachusetts, lay dead in the streets of Baltimore. "Send them home tenderly," telegraphed Governor Andrew, and later he said, "For every hair of their bright young heads laid low, God shall enter judgment against traitors". And Wendell Phillips said, "Massachusetts blood has consecrated the pavements of Baltimore; they are now too sacred to be trodden by slaves". Strange that such words then fell upon a nation apparently deaf to their significance, a nation paralyzed alike to duty and danger.

Arriving in Washington before prepara-

tion could be made for them, these first volunteers in the great army were quartered in the Capitol; and but few of these soldiers realized that because of the bad legislation in those great halls they were now filled with soldiers and their shining muskets. Citizens and soldiers alike refused to believe that the war was a struggle between medieval and modern thought; between barbarism and civilization; between freedom and slavery. And then began the terrible lessons taught in the summer of 1861. The North advanced with uplifted sword in one hand while the other hand was heavy with compromise for the common sin. The magnitude of the approaching struggle was not apparent; still the North had no conception of the terrible sincerity of the South; for never since the days of the crusaders were leaders more fanatical or followers more

faithful than the majority of the Confederate army.

Many believed they had religious sanction for all they did. In the church in Columbia, South Carolina, where the ordinances of secession were first endorsed, a flag was raised, upon which was represented the palmetto tree, an open Bible at its foot, and the inscription "God is our refuge, we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the sea". Stonewall Jackson not infrequently halted his "dust brown ranks" for religious services; and General Lee uniformly ascribed his military successes to an over-ruling Providence. In the Southwest General Price, for several months in the early part of the war, subsisted his devoted army without any aid from the Confederacy. Without uniform and clad in a linen duster, his long white

hair floating as he rode, he led his ragged victors from one success to another.

Early in June sixty-one began the sacrifices in the Federal army. So richly gifted, so well beloved, Theodore Winthrop fell at Great Bethel, mourned by General Butler as a young brother might have been. Then came the first Manassas; the sun rising on the Federal army, marching as if for a holiday parade, and setting upon a disgraceful stampede, with loss of self-respect as well as loss of munitions of war. This was the battle where our Congressmen deserted their desks in the Capitol, crowded into carriages and rode gaily out toward the battle field to see the Rebellion put down that afternoon. It is true Freedom was not without a witness, for now came Fremont's proclamation of August 30th, thrilling the loyal North as nothing had done before; but he was at once

rebuked at Washington and removed from his command. In September Rosecrans stormed the wooded bluffs on the Gauly River, falling back unsuccessful, and when the mountains of Virginia were brilliant with October color, subdued with the velvet green of the dark pines, came the defeat at Ball's Bluff. Here fell William Lowell Putnam, the nephew of James Russell Lowell, whose loss not alone to his family and friends, but to the world as well, no words can estimate. No soul ever looked out from a face more beautiful; no finer example of heroic self-sacrifice enriches history's records.

It was now almost five months since McClellan's address to the army in which he declared his purpose, not to interfere with slavery, and also his purpose to crush what he called servile insurrection. In other words, the men in the Union Army must do guard duty for slave-holders. It was well

for the discipline of our army, that the events of the coming year, the bitter reverses, the loss of the best and bravest was hidden behind the impenetrable veil of the future. And now the great gun-boats, the floating monsters of our newly created Navy, began to move Southward, first to anchor in the harbor of Port Royal. "Here where the black population is 40,000 and the white but 10,000, the Federals will have a remarkable field for their Anti-Slavery experiments," wrote a Confederate editor. Would that this had been true, but it was farther from the truth than most of the announcements of that day. The words of deliverance had not been spoken; the slaves who rowed in skiffs along-side the great ships, or sought on land those whom they supposed were their blue-coated deliverers, were at once sent back to renewed scourging and slavery.

The year 1862 opened without a single

well-defined blow at the cause of the war. Still the great North stood behind her guns watchful, to silence the least whisper in regard to slavery.

The early days of February, 1862, found Grant beginning the ascent of the Tennessee River. The gun-boats moved with majesty on the water, the blue line along the bank marking the advance of the infantry. The magnificent army of the Tennessee was marching cheerfully toward Fort Donelson and death. Still in the future for them was that memorable Sunday, and the battle of Pittsburg landing. But now it is May; Hooker has met Longstreet, and the battle of Williamsburg has been fought. On the eleventh of this month our gun-boats are on the James, but twelve miles from Richmond, and McClellan's great army is encamped within sight of the spires of the Confederate Capitol.

In this Spring of 1862, from thousands of Northern hearts, the great shadow is lifting; surely the war will soon be over. Even then the situation was not comprehended.

The terrific thunder storm which on the 29th of May broke over the Virginia woods was prophetic of the coming storm of musketry and artillery.

On the 30th of May, that date now set apart for the sacred remembrance of the soldiers' graves, came the Confederate attack, led by Johnston. Through the thick woods, over the sweet trailing arbutus, and again over marshes and through deep water, came the assaulting column. Driven from their earth works our army retreated. The battle of Fair Oaks and the seven days' fighting before Richmond darkened those June days with indescribable horror. The continuous volleys of musketry became the tenor in that great battle chorus, and the heavy bass of

the artillery shook the hills and rolled over the valleys.

It was but three years since a gallows stood against the sky at Charlestown, Virginia, and a poet had written:

"Soon shall John Brown tread the
shaking earth
From the Blue Ridge to the sea."

Before the victorious Confederates McClellan was retreating. In the densely timbered swamps which had sheltered many a fugitive slave, the worn and wounded men of the Union army found a temporary protection from the pursuing foe. Our great army had been routed, twenty thousand men killed and wounded, ten thousand prisoners taken. Was it strange that soldiers and citizens were alike discouraged? The conservatives in the North had now received their

object lesson, with a small and faultlessly dressed general as the delineator. McClellan, who had sent the famous Hutchison family out of camp for singing one anti-slavery song—McClellan, who had boasted that he had never befriended a single fugitive, was permitted to educate the nation by sacrificing thousands of lives in the swamps of the Chicahominy. After the defeat of the second Manassas, the North, which two months before had expected the fall of Richmond and the surrender of Lee, could now contemplate the prospect of new battlefields in Pennsylvania and Ohio.

Then to a sorely chastised nation came the announcement of the Proclamation; not as an act of justice, not in obedience to Higher Law, came this belated document, but simply as a war measure. And there were many who remembered that it was nearly two

years since Sumter fell, and they asked if it was to be simply a war measure, why did it not appear with the war? Lydia Maria Child spoke for thousands when she said, "It was a measure to which we were forced by our own perils; no recognition of the principles of justice and humanity surrounded that politic act with a halo of moral glory".

But the renewed bitterness and fury of the South discovered the fact that the Dragon of Slavery had been wounded. The year of jubilee, that day of freedom, that time of which the slaves had whispered in cabin, and in swamp, was it really here? Not as the South had feared, not as the North had hoped, yet a great light shone where before darkness had reigned. For months the conservative North had cried, "Save the Union, but not through the negro; let this

be a white man's war, a white man's victory"; and the President had waited, waited until there was no longer an impulse to fill the broken ranks of the army. Now, there was scarcely a household in all the land that had not felt the agony of that time. The war Democrats, brave and loyal men, who had most willingly shouldered their muskets to defend the "Union as it was"—men of whom the nation then stood in such awe, lest they throw down their guns at the mention of slavery—were now no longer formidable. How many of them in the army had paid the price of prejudice with their lives, and those at home knew that the graves of their sons had been made on many a battlefield.

Then the nation faced its new danger. For months the disloyal people of the North had been sowing seed which was to bloom

in the great draft riots of the summer of 1863. The blighting words, "The war is a failure", passed from lip to lip, and just now it appeared that England thought so too. No men stood ready to take the places of those whose term of enlistment would soon expire. It was but two years since the first soldiers were swept toward the front on waves of patriotic love. Must the nation now be served by drafted men instead of loyal volunteers? This is but a faint and most imperfect portrayal of the minds of men, and the extremity of the nation, when in January, 1863, Governor Andrew came back from Washington with permission from Secretary Stanton to enlist men of African descent, upon an entirely equal footing with white troops. Not as General Butler had organized the Louisiana Guards from free negroes, nor as General Saxton had recruited the first South Carolina.

The 54th was to swell the number of Massachusetts soldiers with no parenthetic explanation that their faces were dark. Looking for a commander for this regiment, which he acknowledged had for months been the "desire of his heart", it was not strange that Governor Andrew should write to Francis George Shaw, a man who had always held his wealth as a trust for the furtherance of every noble cause. His name was a watchword for high endeavor. In her girlhood his wife had espoused the Anti-Slavery cause, and their only son was crowned with their united goodness and strength. "My mind was drawn to your son", wrote the Governor, "by many considerations; the true Republicans and friends of liberty would recognize in him a scion from a tree whose fruit and leaves have always been to the strength and healing of our generation".

It was a matter of such great moment that Francis Shaw himself took the letter to Virginia, where his son was in command of a company in the second Massachussetts. And there, among the mountains in the midst of the war, father and son wrestled with the problems before them. The greater danger, the greater renunciation, they were finally hidden by the realization of the greater duty. The father returned home, and in a few days these words from his son flashed over the wires, "Tell Governor Andrew I accept".

Near the historic ground of the community of Brook Farm, near Boston, the recruiting of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment began. "I remember as if but yesterday", wrote Ednah D. Cheney, "the voice of Colonel Shaw ringing out with peculiar strength and sweetness over the camp at Readville, where his men were drilling".

The organization of this regiment, hailed with such joy by the friends of freedom, was attended by great difficulties. The Confederate Congress had passed an act outlawing both the officers and men of colored regiments. To them the ordinary usages of war were forbidden, and they encountered also the bitter prejudice at home. So strong was the feeling against colored soldiers that the location of the recruiting office in Philadelphia had to be kept secret and the men sent to Boston in small numbers to avoid molestation. No regiment was ever better officered. Through tried friends, and with his great experience, Governor Andrew had a wide field from which to select. Even the Quaker testimony against war went down before his zeal, and the second place in command was given to Edward Hallowell, related by marriage to Lucretia Mott.

Of the officers who took the field, fourteen

were veteran soldiers from the three years' regiments, and six had been previously commissioned. They were representatives of well-known families; many were Harvard men, and some were the descendants of officers in the Revolution. And yet how young they were, for their average age was only twenty-three. The enlisted men in the 54th represented different sections of the country; many were the descendants of free colored citizens of the North, some were the children of slaves brought North for manumition, and a few had found their way from the contraband camps to far away Massachusetts on purpose to enlist in this regiment. One was a cruelly treated slave, fleeing from a Kentucky master, attaching himself to an officer of Indiana troops, and going from camp Morton to Boston to achieve what to him was the greatest of earthly hon-

ors, recognition as a soldier in the Northern army.

It is not now denied or doubted that upon the arming of the negroes the fortunes of the war turned; we might say began, for the coming two years were to be the years of heaviest fighting. The number and terrible character of the battles was to exceed anything we had before experienced. When Colonel Shaw led the first black regiment toward the seat of war, it was not alone the marching of one thousand well-drilled men; it was the advance of nearly three hundred thousand more black soldiers, whose right to march this regiment was to establish.

All that was involved in the marching of the 54th can scarcely be realized now. The white men who were its officers represented in themselves generations of sacrifice for freedom and morality. Surely their ances-

tors had earned for them a fate less terrible! And the men in the ranks were free; they were exchanging freedom, and the joy of living in freedom, not only for the hard life of a soldier, but they risked for themselves the horrors their fathers fled from. The South acknowledged no Proclamation. The auction block stood there still. How truly Edmund Quincy said, "If this nation can be saved, and we may now hope it is to be, it will be by the assistance of the race which owes us no gratitude, and to which the first favor we have granted is the privilege of fighting and dying in our behalf".

Prejudice and hostility to colored troops made it unsafe to send the 54th to the front by railroad, but on the broad Atlantic they were safe from mobs at least. At Battery wharf lay the Government transport, the De Molay, entirely new and to be christened

by this new regiment. At four o'clock on the day of their memorable march through Boston the lines were cut and slowly the great vessel swung into the channel, freighted with those men whose courage and devotion to principle was matched by the love and hope which followed them. At last this first rescuing regiment was on its way to the seat of war.

They have passed Boston Light, and as the sweet May afternoon deepened into sunset, what thoughts must have filled the mind of their young commander. The anti-slavery struggle was well known to Colonel Shaw, and now to the right, a few miles inland, lies Marshfield. Did his thoughts go back to picture the changed condition of the land, if the Lion of Massachusetts had not betrayed Liberty and sold himself to the slave-power? Webster, with the front of

Jove, and those wonderful eyes, with depths like wells of living fire, had descended from his pedestal as Freedom's champion, to be branded as the "Slave hound" of Massachusetts. Had there been no fugitive-slave law this regiment would not now be on its way to South Carolina! How could Colonel Shaw renounce without keenest agony all that he was leaving? The ideal home life, the sisters whose pride he was; the noble father and the beautiful mother, who while idolizing him had given him without reserve; but most of all his thoughts are with the young wife he has left—the orange flowers which crowned her so recently, scarcely withered. How vividly the sweetness of the past stands out against that shadow, the doubt and uncertainty of the future.

The night is shutting down, but suddenly the darkness is lifting. Over the sea the

moon rises, and now he knows that still to the right stands the statue of Miles Standish guarding the Duxbury plain.

It may be that over his soul sweeps the memories of the precious past; the work of the Pilgrims for religious liberty, and the freely given lives of the men of the Revolution that America have freedom from kings. And now men themselves must be made free. Another work must be finished by younger hands, his hands, perhaps. And so as the sea grows wider and the land more distant, the strength which liberty has never withheld from those who love her, came also to him.

It was the early morning, June third, when the sun shining through broken clouds revealed the low sandy shores of South Carolina. Far away were the white sails of the blockading squadron off Charleston harbor. The soft South wind was blowing, and just

below Hilton Head a pilot came along-side in a boat rowed by contrabands. The country was then too full of strangely dramatic events for the full significance of this vivid incident to be realized—these rescued slaves rowing out to meet this fine regiment of their own race, coming from that land toward which they had always looked for deliverance—for to the slaves the North Star was the one star in all the Heavens. For a few days the regiment rested at Beaufort, when the De Molay was again afloat heading for St. Simon's Island. Here for a little while they found an ideal camp. To men reared in the North it was like the Garden of Eden. The luxuriant vegetation seemed to possess an almost visible growth. The live oaks with their festoons of gray moss, the gigantic ferns, the pools in the dark swamps, fair and beautiful with lilies.

On the 24th of June the regiment was ordered to St. Helena. Among the strangely picturesque surroundings, the week spent here was full of enjoyment for Colonel Shaw. Here on the 4th of July he witnessed the celebration of the nation's birthday. Between two great trees of live oak hung the flag, and grouped beneath it the colored people sang the Star Spangled Banner; but soon the feelings of these freed men found expression in their own songs—the music born of sorrow and slavery breathing the hope of freedom and rest in Heaven, for when these songs were made they had no such hope for earth. Then the woods echoed and re-echoed with that well-beloved hymn, "Roll, Jordan Roll". Deeply touched by all he saw, Colonel Shaw expressed the wish that his mother might be with him to share the pleasure of this new experience. Blessed

be the impenetrable veil which hides the future, and wise the silence which was not broken by a single whisper, "Enjoy these, thy few sweet days on earth, they are thy last".

He was apparently unconscious of the adoring attitude of these late slaves. Their eyes followed him as a leader, transcendent and already glorified. One who saw him at St. Helena wrote: "There was something in his face, finer, more exquisite, than one often sees in a man's face, yet it was full of courage and decision".

In July the regiment was ordered to James Island. General Gilmore was preparing to assault the defenses of Charleston Harbor. General Beauregard was in command in Charleston, with the veterans of the Confederate army, and the perfectly trained troops of South Carolina at his disposal in the neighboring forts.

On the 16th of July the 54th began that exceptionally hard march of two days by which the regiment reached Morris Island. Nowhere did our troops encounter harder marching than in these Sea Islands. More and more difficult seemed the way; over the treacherous swamp, over narrow causeways, over streams bridged by a single plank, they painfully advanced. The fury of a tropical storm came upon them, and now and then the vivid lightning revealed for the moment their dangerous way. At day break, on the 17th, weary, without food, and suffering from thirst, they came to the beach opposite Folly Island. Here they paused, but not to rest, for the heat and the glare of the white sand became intolerable.

In the evening the breeze which usually comes to bless the close of the Southern day, came also to them, and they moved up the beach to where a small steamer, the General

Hunter, waited to convey the regiment to Morris Island. A leaky long boat holding thirty men was the only means of boarding the steamer. The rain fell steadily, and through that interminable night the long boat plied from shore to vessel, the men embarking with the aid of a single lantern, and steering against the strong current, for the steamer whose dim light was faintly visible through the mist and gloom.

Colonel Shaw directed the embarking; standing on the wet shore until, as daylight was breaking, he stepped in with the last boat-load, and himself guided to the steamer. The comfortable cabin of the General Hunter had been at his disposal since the evening before, but with rare self-sacrifice he had shared all the hardships of the men, and had they known that the coming dawn marked the rise of his last day on earth,

they could not have given him fuller measure of adoring love. Landing early in the day on that memorable 18th of July they marched across Folly Island. On their right lay the blue Atlantic, the sky and water meeting in the distant horizon line. To the left were the sand hills and low pine woods; and now the sound of the guns at the front was increasing. Waiting at Light-House Inlet, for the small steamer which would set them across, the men around the colors began to sing with wonderful pathos, "When this cruel war is over," and in the chorus the whole regiment joined. To very many of them the war and all earthly experiences would soon be over. While in the Second Massachusetts, in its many hard-fought battles, Colonel Shaw had seemed to bear a charmed life. At Winchester the bullet which sought his heart had been turned

aside by his watch. At Antietam he had most miraculously escaped the death-dealing shells; but for three days the feeling that he would not survive the coming engagement hung over him. Early in the morning of the 18th, Colonel Hallowell found him alone on the steamer's deck. To the anxious and affectionate questionings of his friend, Colonel Shaw replied: "If I could only live a few weeks longer with my wife! If I could only be at home a little while, then I could die! But it cannot be". He asked to be left alone for a little time. So young, and possessing so much to make life precious, the kingdoms of this world were indeed spread out before him in that lonely hour. To renounce life, with all its glorious promises unfulfilled—it was a fearful conflict, but it was the last. In an hour he rejoined his men, and through all the try-

ing hours of that day his face bore witness to the Soul's victory. He had found that peace which triumphed in Gethsemane. It was five o'clock in the afternoon when the 54th landed on Morris Island and waited for orders. For two days and nights these men had been without tents in pelting rain, and they had received no food that day. With full knowledge of all these circumstances General Strong offered to this regiment the post of honor. They were to lead eleven thousand white veterans to the storming of Ft. Wagner. When he saw the great fatigue stamped on their faces, and realized their long fast and weary march, General Strong was greatly touched. He desired to give them food or stimulants, but it was now too late, the order had been given, and in the fast falling darkness the regiment moved away toward the frowning fort.

Earlier in the day Colonel Shaw had been asked by his Lieutenant-Colonel if he intended to go before or behind his men in the coming assault. "I do not know", he replied, "but I trust God will give me strength to do my duty". Now, addressing Colonel Hallowell, he said: "I shall go in advance of the men, with the National flag. Keep the State flag with you; it will give the men something to rally 'round".

There was a peculiar fitness in this first trial of colored troops on South Carolina soil, within sight of the grave of Calhoun and the Spires of Charleston. In no other engagement were the antagonistic elements of the country, and the real issues of the war, so plainly revealed. Within that fort waited the first South Carolina battalion, representing the intolerance, the prejudice, the pride of the South. Before it lay that

splendid regiment of black men from the North. It was as if the lips of outraged Justice were at last unsealed to say, "I have heard the hitherto unanswered cry of the Slave. I have heard it from these dismal swamps, and from the auction blocks of yonder defiant city, and into the muskets held by these black hands, into the shells from these great gunboats from the North, I have put my answer".

The leader of the assaulting column might have heard and understood these words, but the time had not come when they could be comprehended within the fort. During the afternoon the Union signals had been read and the Confederates heavily reinforced. As if to intensify the chances of defeat, never were the usual military precautions disregarded by commanding generals as they were at Wagner.

There was no provision made for spiking the guns, no line of skirmishers or covering party thrown out. The assaulting column advanced over an entirely unsheltered plain which was swept by the guns from Sumter, Moultrie, and the great batteries at Cumming's Point.

While the assaulting column was forming, a few cannon-balls from the Rebel batteries had rolled over the sand. Now, as if to reserve all for the coming conflict, the firing ceased. The flags of this Regiment were four in number, and were of the richest, most beautiful material—gifts of the citizens of Boston, and the personal friends of the regimenal officers. The gold-fringed Standard bearing on its dark-blue field in bright letters the motto, "In hoc signo vinces", was the gift of the mother and near relatives of Lieutenant William Lowell Put-

nam, who fell early in the war. In presenting it, the Governor had said: "This flag has connected with it the most touching and sacred memories. It comes to your regiment from the family of one of the dearest and noblest boys of Massachusetts; may you follow the splendid example, the sweet devotion, of which the life and death of Lieutenant Putnam was one example". These beautiful regimental flags were to be now unfurled, for their first baptism of smoke from the hot throats of the guns—their first rents by the swift bullets. It was not yet three months since they had first floated on the breeze, kissed by the sunshine on that proud day, in far away Boston; and in presenting them to the regiment Governor Andrew had said: "May the God of our fathers cover your heads in the day of battle; and if, on the field of stricken fight your

souls shall be delivered from the thralldom of the flesh, glory and reward shall be given you, even by the hands of the angels who watch you from above". Would that earnest prayer of the great war Governor shelter them now? They formed in line for the assault, and waited. What a strange quietness fell. The great guns were voiceless; about them the darkness deepened. Silent and dark rose the Fort before them. It was but a little while, but to the waiting men it seemed an age until, upon the still air, came the well-known voice and the command, "Forward". Suddenly the dark fort was one blazing mound of fire. The earth was trembling with the fury of cannon and the hideous shriek of shell.

There was nothing so terrible as this in ancient warfare, when ages ago Count Roland cried, "Let us go forward; before us lie two objects, Victory, or Paradise".

Well might our own hero have spoken thus. "I saw his face," said one who survived that night, "It was white as snow, but in every line was that courage which led his men to the very crest of that wall of death". For a little time he still bore a charmed life. Where it seemed no man could stand and live, he stood. "Still we could hear his voice," said one of his men, "In the intervals of that awful crash of musketry we heard him calling 'Rally, rally,' and then, when we could no longer hear him, we felt that he must be dead". Later it was known that as he fell forward into the fort, eleven of his men sprang after him; down into that awful sea of upturned faces, eyes blazing with fury, and features disfigured by hatred, into their midst, even the lifeless body of their beloved leader should not go alone.

In the dark annals of the Civil War, no

greater sacrifice is recorded than that of Fort Wagner. But one great question had been settled forever. In splendid courage, and soldierly bearing, the Negro troops stood without a rival. "Wagner still defies us", wrote George William Curtis, "but prejudice is down". As a military measure the storming of Wagner was a failure. Physical defeat was inevitable, but as a spiritual victory it was complete. When the assault ceased, so terrible had been the loss of officers as well as men, that the shattered regiment was gathered together by a Second Lieutenant. Morning came and revealed that frightful scene of death. It was Sunday. In the distant North, the sweet church bells were calling, and all the earth was clothed in the beauty of midsummer. Across the water from Charleston came also the sound of the bells in St. Michael's

church tower. Those famous English bells brought over in Colonial days, and hung with Colonial pride, had clashed in the very excess of joy for the victories of the Revolution. They had rung again when Sumter fell; but now, as their faint, sweet tones came floating over the bay, it was a dirge they sounded. Within and without the Fort, and on the sea-encircled island, lay the victims of war.

As that Sabbath day wore on, the sequel to all battles began. The flag of truce, the temporary grave. To an inquiry for the body of Colonel Shaw came the reply: "We buried him with his men." All other white officers had received the usual courtesies of war. To him alone, had the furious Confederates given unconsciously the immortal honor of burial with the faithful men, who fell, so many of them, at his very feet. Later,

when an indignant North would have resented this action in an effort to locate the burial place of Colonel Shaw, his father wrote to General Gilmore: "I shall be grateful if you will forbid the desecration of my son's grave, and prevent the disturbance of his remains, or those buried with him." And so it is, that on that lonely island, watched by the clouds and encircled by the sea, too seldom remembered by the Nation he died to save, is the still unknown grave of Robert Gould Shaw.

Nature is tenderly covering, even effacing the traces of the battle-fields of the Civil War. So shall we, a now united nation, cover the wounds in our hearts, and the dark places in our memories with mutual charity and forgiving love, remembering that we of the North bore only half of the sorrow and sacrifice.

In all ages history and legend have clasped hands. In all times leaders have risen to the heights of self-sacrificing devotion; but the likeness of our hero is found far back, when the minnesinger, Wolfram Von-Esenbach, pictured that knight who came so suddenly, and vanished so soon, yet whose memory held the power of actual life; that knight of the Grail, descending from his beautiful home, Montsalvat, clad in shining armor, the avenger of wrong. Crowned with every gift this life can bestow, blessed with love and radiant with the beauty of a blameless life, Robert Gould Shaw vanished from our sight, finishing a task no other hand had claimed. Shall we not count him the Lohengrin of our Civil War? The white knight, who came when necessity was greatest; when over an almost exhausted North, and a still unconquered South, hung the

question: "Will the Negro, forgiving centuries of lash and chain, come to the Nation's rescue, wearing the army blue?" And the leader, and his men, answered that question with their lives. As they waited that night before Wagner, they could not know that the next hour would open the way for that new army of black soldiers, turning the tide of war—they could not know that through the next two years of terrible warfare, still they should be leading, making it possible for Sherman to signal over the heads of his foes, those sustaining messages from Kenesaw and Altoona, those commands to "Hold the Fort, for help is coming". Those who survived that charge at Wagner were then as unconscious as those who perished, that their own courage and devotion through that dark night had blazed the path in the wilderness which would lead to Appomattox.

Now, in 1897, it is sixty years since, in Boston, Robert Gould Shaw was born, and thirty-four years since, in the terrible tumult of war, men turned again, and again, to look upon the unfaded radiance of his dead face. Faithful to duty, although that faithfulness brought physical death, he was all unconscious of the honor and glory which the future would bring.

On the shifting sands of the lonely island where he fell, no tall shaft rises to perpetuate his memory. His monument is in the city of Charleston, where stands the Shaw Memorial School for colored children, and this monument is the more precious because largely built by the small gifts of freed men and colored soldiers.

The love and admiration of his native city is revealed in the monument placed on Boston Common—that matchless work by which Saint Gaudens is willing to be judged,

where, in Gilder's words, the hero and his men are "moving, yet motionless". In the sculptured face may be read devotion to that duty which was as plain to him in the Virginia Mountains as upon the blazing wall of Wagner, where, it may be, he was, through his faith, permitted to see peace approaching through conflict.

"See, war the fetters strike
From white and black alike,
See, past the pain and scorn,
A Nation saved, a race redeemed,
And Freedom newly born".

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